

this is where i scream from by orphan_account

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Summary:

Mike was always there to hold an open ear for his friends if they needed to talk something out. But Mike never went to them with this particularly dream, because how could you explain to your friends that the experience that haunted you the most wasn't even related to the Upside Down.

[or: he knew he would die, and he jumped anyway.]

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Author's Note:

this one shot nearly destroyed me and i am very happy to have it done so i can go back to all my other WIPS lmao. it's not even that long but it still took me three days of writing nothing but this to spit it out and i PROMISE that i'll now get back to my multi chaptered fics and prompts on Tumblr!!!

The wind blew just slightly across Mike's face, not quite enough to ruffle up his hair but just enough to bite. He was only half aware of the sounds of Dustin shouting behind him, though he supposed the slight wind was bringing the words to his ears perfectly. [No, Mike, stop! I don't need my baby teeth!] It wasn't enough to stop Mike's forward movements forward, he didn't think anything would be. Nothing could stop his descent now.

He foot hovered over the edge for a moment, just one singular moment of hesitation, a moment shorter than even Mike knew a normal person would take. Then he dropped off, simply taking one singular step forward and letting himself fall through the air.

El's going to save me, Mike reminds himself as he feels the light wind that had been lightly brushing his face turn to something swifter and scarier in seconds. He'd already been falling too long, falling forever. Maybe he'd always been falling, had been falling this whole time? Perhaps the only thing Mike had ever known was falling, and everything else had been elaborate ruse set up by his mind to ignore it.

Mike willed himself to wrench his eyes open and found himself face to face with an endless horizon of cold, grey water and he screamed. He launched forward in his bed, sweaty to the point where his clothes were stuck to his body and his hair fell flat against his forehead in wet strands.

Breathing heavily, Mike threw himself out of bed completely. Standing on trembling legs, he moved around his room with an all too familiar method of grabbing fresh clothes and tossing the

necessities into his rucksack. He tossed it over his shoulder and exited his bedroom as quietly as he could. It wasn't until he was passing Nancy's bedroom with the thrown open door that he realized he didn't need to be quiet- Nancy was never home anymore, and she didn't even put in the effort to pretend she was like she used to. Either way, Mike thought to himself, me screaming bloody murder would have woken her up if she were here. She wouldn't have come in to check on him, they both had their nightmares. The screams coming from either room had stopped being a concern for even his mother, who was more than happy to pretend she knew nothing about anything.

Slipping quietly down the stairs, Mike rolled his eyes at the sight of his father resting on the couch. What had once been Ted casually falling asleep on the living room couch after dinner had become his permanent sleeping location in the past couple of months. Aside from the family dinners his mother still insists that they had once a week, Mike couldn't remember the last time he'd seen his parents in the same room for more than ten seconds total.

I wish they'd just get a divorce already, Mike thought bitterly as he opened the door. He gave no care to whether his father was awoken when he slammed the front door behind him. It was unlikely, as Mike supposed that the entire family could be murdered in their beds and Ted Wheeler wouldn't be stirred from the couch.

The crisp autumn air hitting him brought a calm, stillness to Mike's mind and chose to leave his bike left in the garage. Setting forward, Mike kept his eyes to ground and forced his mind to stay blank. The cold air brought down his body temperature and he was no longer sweating from the dream. It wasn't a new dream by any means, it was actually something that had taunted him for ages.

It had been nearly three years since El had closed the gate and they'd gotten Will back from the Mind Flayer. There had, blessedly, been nothing Upside Down related to wreck havoc on their lives since then and Mike was thankful for it everyday. Nobody was without their scars, he knew they all had dreams. The Party had all promised that they'd talk to each other about their dreams and Mike was always there to hold an open ear for his friends if they needed to talk something out. But Mike never went to them with this particularly

dream, because how could you explain to your friends that the experience that haunted you the most wasn't even related to the Upside Down. He was sure that his friends would just laugh him off? After all the things he'd been through, this was the thing he got hung up on? It was pathetic, and he knew it. So he kept it to himself.

These little late night visits to the Quarry were another he kept to himself. The Party was pretty negative at the thoughts of anybody going anywhere by themselves- and even more than The Party was, Steve and Hopper were. Even three years later, the trauma followed you around and struck fear into every movement you made. Mike, for his own credit, was never really afraid to be alone after darkness settled on the night. He came to the Quarry at least three times a week lately.

As he got close to the entrance, Mike was surprised to hear voices carrying down towards him. He froze for a moment, stomach churning and threatening to spew out the little bit of dinner he'd managed to stuff down to appease his mother. He stood completely still in panic for a moment before a familiar voice reached him.

"Just give me the shit, Harrington!" Dustin's voice called out into the night and Mike crinkled up in confusion. What were Dustin and Steve doing up at the Quarry, arguing, in the middle of night? Regaining the motion in his body, Mike stomped towards them only to freeze once he realized it wasn't Steve Harrington he was standing at the top of the cliff with.

It was Troy Harrington, and they seemed to be scuffling over a plastic lunch baggie.

"What are you doing?" Mike called out. Dustin and Troy both froze, turning to look at him. Troy gave a scoff and look of disgust at the sight of him, but Dustin very much resembled a deer seconds before it got hit by a car.

"Mike, I-" Dustin looked back at Troy before shooting Mike a pleading look. Don't make me say it, the look seemed to beg. But maybe Mike needed to hear it.

"Get out of here, Frog Face," Troy shot out the outdated nickname

that no longer rang true for Mike Wheeler but always managed to sting all the same. "We're having a business transaction, there's nothing for you to see here."

Troy's extracurricular activities weren't exactly a secret, and Mike had heard Hopper grumbling more than a few times about he wished he could catch the little street rat in action so he arrest him. Mike supposed that there were better things he wanted Troy arrested for before this but suddenly there was nothing Mike wanted more than to see Troy in handcuffs for what was going down with Dustin right now.

"Mike, don't freak out, okay-" Dustin was speaking but Mike suddenly felt chilled to the bone with the irony of the entire situation. He had fled his house in the midnight of the night from a nightmare just to find himself standing on that same cliffs edge with the two people who brought it into existence.

Mike's breathing got heavier and he was sure that if he were looking at himself in the mirror, his eyes would be wide enough to take over his face. "How can you trust him?" Mike cried, voice trembling in the most terrifying way. Dustin clamped his mouth shut halfway through reassuring Mike that there was nothing to worry about. "After... after what he did. What he... What he made me do!"

The words hung dead in the air, Dustin's face paled as Troy finally started to look nervous. Mike moved quickly past them and ended on the very edge of the cliff. He remembered- God, did he remembered- letting his foot hang forward in the moments before dropping off.

"Mike! What are you doing?" Mike don't! Mike, seriously, don't! Mike turned around to look at Dustin, knowing his eyes must be wild and that they could likely both see him shaking like a leaf. "Get back!"

"It didn't mean anything to you!" Mike screamed, balling his hands into fists at his side. "I would have died for you and all you cared about was El's powers! And now you- now you're friends with him? After everything? Just push me off, Henderson. DO it."

Dustin shook his head quickly, and even through the daze in Mike's mind he could see the tears glistening in his friends eyes. "Mike,

you're being fucking batshit. Get away from the edge, man, okay?" Dustin stepped towards slowly as though Mike was an small woodland animal that would be scared away with any sudden movements. Mike let out a shaky, watery laugh when he realized that was probably the most accurate description of him as of late.

"Damn, Wheeler, I knew you were a little unhinged but Jesus-" Troy scoffed with an eye roll. "Are you actually going to kill yourself because your friend is buying drugs?"

It felt like every organ inside Mike body's vibrated in that moment. Was he? Was that what he was doing? He glanced back over his shoulder, the night so dark that Mike couldn't even make out the bottom of the Quarry from this height. He'd jumped before, certainly, and he'd been prepared to die then. Expected it, accepted it, hadn't even tried to fight it. Was that what was happening here now? The cruelest twist of irony that would be lost on all but three other people, and forever devastating to the one that wasn't here.

Mike was so deep in his exploding mind waves that Dustin screaming at Troy to "get the FUCK out of here, I swear to GOD-" was only a dim roaring in his ears. For a moment Mike considered just breaking into a run away from this place, away from Dustin and Troy and his memories, and not stopping until he got back home. He'd run into Nancy's room and she'd let him sleep in there like when they were kids, and she wouldn't even ask him what happened and-

Mike let out a choked sob when his brain forced him to remember that he couldn't do that. That Nancy wasn't there, that he and his hadn't even had a conversation that lasted more than ten minutes in nearly six months. Thought process stunted and not properly travelled through a body that had tensed in an anticipation of a great trauma, Mike stepped forward to the edge and-

Landed harshly on his side, a heavy immediately landing on top of him and knocking on the wind out of him.

"Jesus fucking Christ, Mike, what the fuck... what the fuck?" Dustin was crying, words practically slurring together in one never ending word. Mike was only half aware of his own wet cheeks as he fought at Dustin, screaming for him to get off. "No, no, FUCK you, Mike! I'm

not- you don't- is this what you fucking came here to do? Are you trying to kill yourself?"

"NO!" Mike screamed, feeling his throat rip angrily in protest of his volume. He smacked repeatedly at Dustin's chest until Dustin moved so he was straddling Mike's hips and forcing his own arms to his chest.

"Stop fucking hitting me!!!" Dustin shouted at him. "What is your damn problem?!?"

"How could you even look at Troy Harrington?" Mike shouted at him, ready to scream until his voice gave out on him completely. "He held a KNIFE to your face! He made me jump off that stupid fucking cliff, knowing I would die! He made me, he told me and I fucking dream about it every fucking night! How you could you?"

Mike's words got lost in the sound of his sobs and he was no longer fighting against Dustin's grip but merely folding into it. Dustin yanked on Mike's shoulders to pull him into a position that could almost be considered sitting, which was really just Mike half laying on the ground which Dustin straddling his lap and Mike's face pressed a little painfully into his shoulder.

The parallel of this position wasn't lost on either of them, and Mike supposed it wasn't helping Mike calm his tears.

Dustin rubbed absentmindedly at his shoulder. "I break about it, too, you know," Dustin said, his voice broken in way that Mike wasn't sure he'd ever heard from his most happy-go-lucky friend. "Probably not as much you would have, but they're there. Out of all the fucked up things we've seen, you just dropping off the fucking cliff.. Man, fuck."

Mike buried his face deeper into Dustin's jacket. The wind kept blowing around him, much heavier at the cliffs end than it had been at Mike's house. Mike wasn't crying anymore, but he couldn't tell you how long the two of just sat there, together. They didn't pull apart until they heard the sound of tires against the gravel.

Hopper stepped out of his truck and walked towards the boys with

his hands on his hips. Dustin slipped away from Mike's lap, scratching the back of his neck. He reached for his hat, which Mike hadn't noticed had been discarded in the scuffle. They both pulled themselves to their feet and kept their eye line with Hopper's.

After everything they'd been through, neither Dustin nor Mike were particularly scared of the Hawkins' Chief of Police. After knowing how many laws he'd personally broken himself- sometimes for their own well-being- it was sometimes hard to be intimidated by him.

"Why I am not surprised that a disturbance call at 2 in the morning at the fucking Quarry would lead me to two of you," Hopper rolled his eyes. Dustin and Mike exchanged a sideways glance, almost a smirk. Even if Hopper didn't insight any intimidation from them- and even if Hopper knew damn well that he didn't- it was still common courtesy to pretend that he did. "Get in the truck, go on, get."

Mike and Dustin scampered over towards the truck and both jumped into the backseat. Hopper walked over and casually let himself in. Sitting in the silence was one of Hopper's classic methods these days, thinking it would lead them to really sweat out their punishment. It didn't work any better than the old ones.

"So, why all the noise?" He asked lightly. Mike quickly looked over at Dustin, biting at his lip. Any answer to the question seemed like a bad idea.

"Mike caught me with Troy and promptly lost his complete and total shit," Dustin said without glancing back to Mike. Hopper let out a loud, annoyed sigh as Mike glanced between his two companions with confusion.

"Wait, wait, what?" Mike asked, holding his still slightly shaking hands up in surrender.

Hopper turned around fully in his chair to look at Mike. "I had Dustin undercover so I catch that Harrington brat in the act. Normally, I wouldn't be all that concerned with some weed dealing, because truthfully, I don't care that much. But that kid I just... I don't like him."

Mike whipped around, sitting sideways in his seat and gave Dustin the most unimpressed, withering look he could manage. "So you're telling me that you weren't even doing it for real? That all this was over some... some heist?"

Dustin rolled his eyes. "It's not like you gave me more than six seconds to explain before you were dangling yourself off the fucking cliff, dude. When was I supposed to bring it up?"

Both boys froze and jerked to look at Hopper, who was staring at them with a soft illusion of disinterest. "Alright, well," Hopper cleared his throat. "I can't exactly have you both climbing up here and tossing yourselves off cliffs in the middle of the night so-

"Safe the suicide attempts for daylight?" Mike asked dryly. Dustin made an uncomfortable noise in the back of his throat and Hopper gave Mike an unimpressed look.

"Don't get mouthy with me, Wheeler," he warned. "Or I'll be mentioning this little midnight run to Joyce."

The ride to drop them back off at home was silent after that, until Hopper let Dustin out and proceeded to drive directly past the Wheeler house.

"Wait, I-" Mike stammered and met Hopper's gaze in the mirror.

"You know," Hopper said. "Will and Jane have a therapist, she's actually really great. They both say she helps a lot... and not just with the supernatural PTSD stuff. If you ever wanted her number, I've got it written on the fridge in case of emergencies."

"I..." Mike cleared his throat, suddenly feeling that overwhelming emotion in his chest once again. "Thank you, but I'd have to get my parents to pay for it and I couldn't explain it and my dad-

"Don't worry about that, kid. Money won't be a problem." Hopper said in a no-nonsense voice that even Mike knew better than to fight against. "Just take the number, call her."

Mike nodded once, staring down at his hands as they pulled into Byers driveway.